

NSC BRIEFING

KERALA

16
NO CHANGE IN CLASSIFICATION
X DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C
NEXT REVIEW DATE: 17 June 1959
HP 700
12-28-71 REVIEWER: 372044

- I. Communist government in Kerala State facing most serious threat from opposition during more than two years in power.
 - A. Coalition led by Congress party launched "nonviolent" civil disobedience campaign on 12 June to protest government misdeeds.
 1. Congress party has published 37 charges against government, including intimidation of non-Communist parties and economic failures.
 - B. Catholic and upper-caste Hindu communities opened their own intensive agitation against Communist education policies on 15 June.
 1. Communists have pushed through legislation giving them greater control over private schools in Kerala, especially in selection of teachers.
 2. Religious leaders are up in arms over threat to their 7,000 schools--comprising two-thirds of total number of schools in Kerala.
- II. Simultaneous political and communal agitation continues with mass demonstrations, although violence seems to be tapering off.
 - A. Local police fired on several crowds; to date 12 killed, many injured, and hundreds arrested.
 - B. Both Communists and opposition leaders had hoped to pin blame for any violence on each other.
 1. National and state Communist party bosses agreed at meeting on 7 June to avoid police firing until clearly needed to prevent severe disorder.

2. Anti-Communists now likely to exploit casualties to incite further "direct action" against government.

III. Local opposition leaders determined to keep agitation going until Communists are ousted.

- A. They hope Communist cabinet will eventually be forced to resign or that breakdown in law and order will cause New Delhi to suspend parliamentary government and impose direct rule.
- B. Opposition coalition--led by Kerala Congress party--may have acted prematurely in launching all-out effort at this time.
 - 1. Local Congress organization has made only limited progress in correcting weaknesses which lost last election while Communists have used power of office to strengthen party.
 - 2. Apparent unity now prevailing among opposition groups unlikely to hold up during period following any ouster of Communists.

IV. Kerala conflict places Nehru in dilemma.

- A. Congress leadership hopes Communists will fall, but Nehru especially concerned that his party not be exposed to charge of using "undemocratic" methods.
- B. Army reinforcements (about 3,000 troops) have been sent to Kerala, mainly to forestall Communist charge that New Delhi failed to help maintain law and order and also be on hand in case intervention required.

v. Communists face problem of steadily losing popular support to opposition.

A. Party leaders split over whether government should resign to avoid further damage to Communist position throughout India.

B. ~~Unless serious violence breaks out again~~ Communists probably can contain agitation for present.